

State of California  
Business, Transportation and Housing Agency  
Department of Transportation

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HIGHWAY & INTERREGIONAL  
MOBILITY COMMITTEE  
Roadside Rest Master Plan  
Information Item  
CTC Meeting: June 14, 2000  
  
Agenda Item: 3

*Original Signed By Jim Nicholas for*\_\_\_\_  
W.J. EVANS, Deputy Director  
Finance  
June 1, 2000

**SAFETY ROADSIDE REST AREA PROGRAM**  
**SYSTEM MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND**  
**JOINT DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS**

**PURPOSE**

This presentation is to inform the California Transportation Commission (Commission) about the Department's efforts for planning for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Safety Roadside Rest Area System and to report on the fresh approach the Department is taking to encourage public-private partnerships.

**BACKGROUND**

In 1998, the Department invited its Districts, Programs, and stakeholders to select representatives to participate in a Safety Roadside Rest Area System Improvement (SRRA) Team. The SRRA Team was empowered to examine the purpose, physical condition, and operation of California's Safety Roadside Rest Area System, and to make recommendations for improvement.

The SRRA Team's report, *"Enhancing Highway Safety and Serving the Public: A Recommendation for Improving the Caltrans Safety Roadside Rest Area System"* was approved by the Department in September 1999, and shared with the Commission at its November 1999 meeting.

The Commission indicated its desire that the Department continue to pursue joint-development and partnership opportunities aimed at reducing the State's costs for constructing and operating new safety roadside rest areas. The Commission asked the Department to work with agencies and organizations historically opposed to rest area privatization to seek common ground for their support.

**Current Rest Area Planning Activities:**

**UPDATE REST AREA MASTER PLAN** - In December 1999, TEA-21 State Planning and Research funding was approved for updating the Department's Safety Roadside Rest Area System Master Plan. The SRRA Team has remained intact to provide input to the Department's development of the Master Plan, which is due to be completed this summer. Potential joint-development partners have been invited to participate in team meetings, and some have accepted the invitation.

The Master Plan will identify the current and 20-year short-term parking capacity deficiency at each existing rest area. It will also identify general locations for new or replacement facilities that are needed and recommended by the Department's District Directors. These locations are being identified and described by interdisciplinary District teams that are analyzing traffic data, observations of chronic illegal and unsafe roadside parking, specific site limitations and opportunities, and recommendations received from local government, the California Highway Patrol, the California Trucking Association, and other stakeholders.

The Master Plan will provide a long-range, comprehensive view for evaluating rest area capital improvement projects, and for evaluating specific joint-development/operation partnership proposals. As a dynamic decision-making tool, the Master Plan will need to be updated periodically as conditions and opportunities change. The Master Plan will not recommend a specific program funding level or priorities for individual projects. Those issues will continue to be addressed as part of the ten-year State Highway Operation and Protection Plan development process. Upon completion of the updated Master Plan, the Department will request concurrence by the Commission.

#### Planning for Rest Area Joint-Economic Development and Partnerships

**REST AREA PRIVATIZATION COMMITTEE** - In December 1999, the Department established a Rest Area Privatization Committee, chaired by retired Department District Director Ken Steele. Participants from External Affairs, Legal and Right of Way, have been discussing fresh approaches to partnership and are available to talk with any potential partners or interested stakeholders.

**JOINT-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** - All new facilities on the Master Plan will be offered as potential sites for up to six joint-economic-development rest areas, as authorized by Streets and Highways Code Section 226.5. The Department anticipates advertising a comprehensive Request for Proposals soliciting private-sector partnership for any eligible facility included in the Master Plan. The Department will develop criteria to competitively evaluate proposals, including proposer qualifications, site importance, economic terms offered, and degree of local support. The Department will strive to develop model partnerships that leverage public funding and maximize the availability and quality of safe roadside stopping opportunities for California motorists.

**COMMERCIAL TRUCK PARKING** – The Department also formed an In-Route Truck Issues Task Force, as recommended in the SRRA Team's report. The Task Force has met several times to discuss drowsy driving, illegal roadside parking, the availability and capacity of commercial truck stops, in-route trucker information needs, new FHWA and AASHTO initiatives, and how the role of the Department's rest areas play in all of this. The Task Force, chaired by the Traffic Operations Program, includes participation by the California Highway Patrol, the California Trucking Association, the California Chapter of the National Association of Truck Stop Operators, the Automobile Association of Southern California and the California State Automobile Association.

The Task Force has identified a privatization/partnership concept that appears tentatively acceptable to truck stop operators, truckers, the Department of Rehabilitation, and the Federal Highway Administration. In a nutshell, the concept proposes the Department's construction of fenced, lighted parking lots built adjacent to commercial developments in the vicinity of overcrowded rest areas or at locations where the Master Plan indicates unmet safe stopping needs. Through competitive, negotiated, long-term agreements, the commercial enterprises would provide restrooms, clean up litter and provide security to these auxiliary lots. The auxiliary lots would be free to all motorists and would be signed from the highway, as well as from the nearby "mother" rest area. Land for the auxiliary lots might be purchased or leased by the State. Entrepreneurs consulted regarding this concept have expressed no objection to Department of Rehabilitation vending installations in these lots. As auxiliary lots come on line, rest area regulations might be amended to allow only short stops at the rest area, while directing those who need a longer rest to the nearby auxiliary lots. This concept could alleviate the critical shortage of truck parking at many of California's rest areas, avoid costly expansion of parking at sites with limited room for expansion, gain the support of local business and government, and reduce the Department's operational costs.

The SRRA Team and the Task Force is working with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to obtain a grant under the FHWA's "Partners for Adequate Parking Facilities" initiative to develop model guidelines and agreements for the auxiliary parking lot concept. The grant also would provide resources to assess the current and future availability of commercial truck parking spaces, to determine if there truly is a shortage of total public and private parking opportunities prior to expending public funds.

**NEGOTIATIONS WITH HISTORICAL OPPONENTS OF JOINT-DEVELOPMENT** – The Department has involved the Department of Rehabilitation, Business Enterprise Program for the Blind as a member in the SRRA Team. Department of Rehabilitation's Blind Vendor Advisory Committee has also recently joined the SRRA Team. The California Chapter of the National Association of Truck Stop Operators, another ardent opponent of previous privatization initiatives, is also new to the SRRA Team and Task Force. This new open discussion of objectives, fears and concerns is allowing the exploration of fresh ideas for politically viable partnerships. So far everyone seems open-minded.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Department would welcome participation by Commission staff in any of the above team efforts. The Department needs to pursue a Safety Roadside Rest Area strategy that will satisfy the growing safe-stopping needs of California's motorists, while at the same time, improving the quality, safety and economy of rest area services through appropriate partnerships.